

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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R 270911Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6238

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 4462

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ASEAN

SUBJ: ASEAN STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING IN SINGAPORE

REF: SINGAPORE 4269

1. IN ADDRESS TO ASEAN STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING IN SINGAPORE SEPTEMBER 20, FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM SAID THAT IMPLEMENTING THE BALI SUMMIT ECONOMIC DECISIONS SHOULD HAVE OVERRIDING PRIORITY OVER ALL OTHER MATTERS. NOTING THAT THE SUMMIT DIRECTIVES COINCIDED WITH THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY, RAJA SAID ASEAN MUST NOT LOSE THIS MOMENTUM AND SHOULD PROCEED WITH THE STEADY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FIVE INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS AND THE CONCLUSION OF THE ASEAN AGREEMENT ON PREFERENTIAL TRADING AGREEMENTS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT WHEN THE FIVE PROJECTS WERE REALIZED, ASEAN WOULD HAVE FAR LESS DIFFICULTY IN ATTRACTING INVESTMENT ON A BIGGER SCALE.

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2. RAJA STRESSED THAT ASEAN HAD NO AGGRESSIVE INTENT AND NOTED THAT ASEAN HAD NOT DECLARED IT WAS OUT TO "LIBERATE OTHER PEOPLES OR TO SHAPE THE LIVES OF OTHERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS OWN IMAGE". IN AN OBVIOUS ALLUSION TO SRV PROPAGANDA, RAJA STATED THAT ASEAN SHOULD SAFEGUARD ITS MEMBERS FROM BECOMING VICTIMS OF "THOSE WHO FEEL THEMSELVES UNDER COMPULSION TO LIBERATE US FROM OURSELVES". MAXIMIZING ASEAN'S POTENTIAL FOR DOMESTIC PEACE AND PROSPERITY WOULD GIVE ASEAN MEMBERS IMMUNITY AGAINST EFFECTIVE INTERFERENCE FROM OUTSIDE.

3. DURING DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN DCM AND DEPUTY SECRETARY MFA TAN BOON SENG ON SEPTEMBER 24, TAN SAID THE STANDING COMMITTEE HAD DEVOTED LITTLE TIME TO THE DISCUSSION OF ECONOMIC MATTERS, AND HAD MERELY "TAKEN NOTE" OF THE SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS WHICH HAD BEEN MADE BY THE COMMITTEES WORKING ON THE FIVE INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS AND ON THE PREFERENTIAL TRADE ARRANGEMENTS. HE SUGGESTED THAT IT WOULD BE UP TO THE ASEAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS TO REVIEW AND ADVANCE THE WORK OF THESE COMMITTEES. THE STANDING COMMITTEE REPRESENTED THE FOREIGN MINISTERS AND HAD CONCENTRATED LARGELY ON REACHING A SOLUTION TO THOSE PROBLEMS WHICH WERE DELAYING THE EFFECTIVE OPERATION OF THE ASEAN SECRETARIAT. HAPPILY THE STANDING COMMITTEE HAD AGREED ON A COMPLICATED FORMULA WHICH HAD BROKEN THE IMPASSE CONCERNING THE ALLOCATION OF SENIOR POSITIONS IN THE SECRETARIAT.

4. THE STANDING COMMITTEE HAD ALSO AGREED ON AN INITIAL BUDGET OF S\$250,000 WHICH WOULD FINANCE THE SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS FOR ITS FIRST FOUR MONTHS -- WITH EACH MEMBER COUNTRY CHIPPING IN EQUALLY. BEFORE FUNDS RAN OUT, TAN WAS HOPEFUL THAT ASEAN WOULD REACH AGREEMENT UPON A FORMULA (SUCH AS THE ONE USED BY THE ADB) WHICH WOULD ALLOCATE THE FINANCING MORE FAIRLY. TAN WAS HOPEFUL THAT THESE DECISIONS WOULD INSURE THAT THE SECRETARIAT WOULD BE FUNCTIONING FAIRLY WELL WITHIN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.

5. FINALLY, THE STANDING COMMITTEE HAD FORMALLY APPROVED A PROPOSAL IN WHICH EACH MEMBER HAD BEEN DESIGNATED AS THE PRINCIPAL CONTACT POINT WITH COUNTRIES OR ORGANIZATIONS OUTSIDE OF ASEAN. FOR EXAMPLE, THE PHILIPPINES HAD BEEN DESIGNATED TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL CONTACT WITH THE UNITED STATES WITH RESPECT TO ANY FUTURE DIALOGUE BETWEEN ASEAN AND THE U.S. HE
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OBSERVED THAT THERE IS STILL DISAGREEMENT IN ASEAN BETWEEN THOSE GOVERNMENTS WHICH FELT ASEAN SHOULD MAKE THE FIRST MOVE TO PROPOSE SUCH A DIALOGUE AND THOSE WHICH FELT IT WAS UP TO THE U.S. TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE. HOLDRIDGE

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